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ABSTRACT

Trivial Pursuit is a fascinating and popular game most students are familiar with in English. Most are also eager to play it in a foreign language, with the result that inhibitions about speaking are reduced or eliminated and many structures are used. The game is available in German, French, Italian, and Spanish. Some questions about Anglo-American culture have been replaced by items concerning target language cultures. The game works best with advanced classes, but teachers can develop versions of the game appropriate for students with lower levels of proficiency. To ensure student success, the teacher must set clear goals, preview needed vocabulary, and make the rules explicit. While students play, the teacher can compile new vocabulary lists and promote discussions about intriguing questions. Followup content and vocabulary quizzes also can be used. The second half of the term is the best time for introducing the game because the teacher knows student abilities and compatibility, and students are more comfortable with each other. Imaginative students are a good source of ideas for expanding the game. Trivial Pursuit can be used to meet a variety of basic objectives: intellectual stimulation, generation of spontaneous dialogue, expansion of vocabulary, valuable and current cultural information, and active oral language use. (MSE)

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15 Trivial Pursuit® in the Foreign Language Classroom

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TRIVIAL PURSUIT® is a unique and fascinating intellectual game that has achieved a very high status in the mind of the public.[1] If one is good at TRIVIAL PURSUIT one is considered to be "smart," especially among young people. The game is so successful because it simultaneously caters to two very important cultural needs in all of us, the quest for knowledge, and the urge to play. The players think and enjoy at the same time. There are almost unlimited possibilities for expansion, and the rules of play are very flexible. These features and the almost total dependence on precise oral expression make TRIVIAL PURSUIT an excellent means to train students to converse spontaneously in the target language for an extended period of time in the classroom and at language club get-togethers.

Most students have spent hours playing TRIVIAL PURSUIT with great enthusiasm in English, and they are familiar with the rules and the format of the questions. When they find out that TRIVIAL PURSUIT is available in the language they are studying, their curiosity is aroused and they are eager to play. As soon as the first question is read, all inhibitions about speaking in the target language disappear and the magic of trivia hunting takes over. The players discuss the questions, sometimes argue about them and often voice disappointment, even disgust when they cannot answer a seemingly easy question. They constantly employ different types of structure—questions, statements, commands, exclamations—and a wealth of vocabulary.

[1] Trivial Pursuit is the registered trademark of Horn Abbot Ltd. in Canada, the Union of South Africa, and the United States of America and is the registered trademark of Horn Abbot International Ltd. throughout the rest of the world.

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TRIVIAL PURSUIT is now available in German, French, Italian, and Spanish.[2] Questions of universal knowledge have been translated and appear in their appropriate categories, giving students the advantage of familiarity. The students really get excited when they understand this type of question and respond to it, even if they don't know all the words that are used to state the question. Familiar questions take on a whole new aura for the students when they hear them in the foreign language.

To market the game successfully in other countries, the authors have replaced questions very particular to Anglo-American culture with questions relating to the foreign culture, especially in the areas of current events, sports, and entertainment. Looking for the answers to these questions often leads to fruitful discussions, which provide unusual insights into the interests and concerns of the German-, French-, or Spanish-speaking countries.

Because the original TRIVIAL PURSUIT was translated and altered to challenge native speakers, it works best in advanced classes that are oriented towards oral proficiency. At the same time, the game is so adaptable that modified versions can be introduced on the elementary and intermediate levels. With the textbook as a source and by soliciting ideas from the students, the instructor creates game cards for the different levels. Categories can be changed to make the game more vocabulary or structure oriented. To add suspense, and to challenge the better students as well, some difficult questions are included in the game.

To ensure success on all levels, the instructor must set clear goals for the students and for the game's place in the overall program. The students need to understand that the game is a means to improve oral proficiency. Several days before playing time, the instructor assigns the vocabulary necessary to conduct the game. The rules of play in the target language serve as a guide for assembling the list. The students receive a handout, which may have the following format:

> The main purpose for playing TRIVIAL PURSUIT in class is for you to develop your oral skills in the target language.
>
> You will learn to respond spontaneously to unfamiliar questions.
>
> You will find out that you can figure out meanings without knowing all the words.

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[2]The German, French, Italian, and Spanish versions are available from Teacher's Discovery, 1130 E. Big Beaver Rd., Troy, MI 48083-1997; toll-free number: 1-800-521-3897.

You will get into the habit of thinking in the target language.

You will receive a wealth of information about the foreign country.

At the same time you will have fun playing a popular game.
The language of communication throughout the game is the target language.
Any English word I hear is an "illegal motion," and the player who is at play forfeits his turn.
Learn the words and phrases necessary for the mechanics of the game.
You are responsible for the vocabulary listed on the blackboard and the cultural information assigned.
Winning is fun but it is not as important as learning the art of formulating good questions and answers. Finding an answer through lively discussion in the target language is more beneficial than completing the game.

Before play begins, the class decides whether the basic rules of play are to be followed or if changes need to be made to allow for limited time. If the students wish to complete the game in one 45- to 50-minute class session, a shorter version can be agreed upon. One possibility is that the player does not have to land on a corner to receive a wedge for a correct answer in a given category. He will receive a wedge every time he lands on a color and answers the appropriate question correctly. In small classes each student plays individually, in large classes several students form a team and select a team speaker who is responsible for stating the answer. Another member of the team serves as the reader of the question for the next team. To practive pronunciation and to get the students accustomed to listening to each other, players take turns in reading the questions.

While the students are playing, the instructor works with the different aspects of language acquisition. He compiles a list of the new words the students should learn for vocabulary building. He promotes discussions about an especially intriguing question. Although the questions occur at random, it is possible to group certain questions together and hold the students responsible for the information. In the category "History," for example, several questions about one important event may come up, giving the students a chance to do further study on the subject.

To make sure that the students take the game seriously, the instructor may follow up by giving quizzes. Vocabulary quizzes can be made more attractive by stating a question with a blank to fill in the word to be learned.

Quizzes about content can be in the form of "True or False" or in stating the answers and letting the students formulate the questions.

The best time to introduce TRIVIAL PURSUIT in a class is after the first half of a term when the instructor is familiar with the ability and compatibility of the students. By that time, the students know each other and can contribute to a congenial atmosphere that is conducive to language learning.

Since the original TRIVIAL PURSUIT is too difficult for elementary and intermediate students, the instructor will create an appropriate version for these levels. The familiar TRIVIAL PURSUIT color coding is applied to a slightly changed set of categories. The selection of categories and questions is determined by the text and by the material covered and allows the instructor to reinforce certain areas of vocabulary, structure, and cultural information. The following set of categories was developed from an elementary and intermediate text in German:

Original TRIVIAL PURSUIT Category	Elementary/Intermediate Foreign Language Category
Geography	Geography
Entertainment	Food, Drink, Holidays
History	History and Politics
Art and Literature	Art and Literature
Science and Nature	Science and Nature
Sports and Leisure	Vocabulary and Miscellaneous

The two categories that have been changed in the example above contain mostly questions that can be answered only by players who have a thorough knowledge of the country's present cultural concerns and interests. In most foreign language texts the subject of eating and feasting occurs early because it is of great interest to the students. What people eat, how, when, and why supplies the material for many questions of varying form and difficulty. "Vocabulary" can stand as a category by itself, if the instructor wishes to emphasize vocabulary building. There are many ways to elicit answers in the target language including the following:

Where do you find a _____?
What do you do with a _____?
Who uses a _____?
What is the opposite of _____?

"Miscellaneous" may contain questions about the meaning of important abbreviations, the age at which young people can obtain a

driver's license, business hours of stores and banks, and other trivia that do not fit in any other category.

The game created for the lower levels will resemble the original TRIVIAL PURSUIT more closely, if a few very obscrue and difficult questions pop up here and there. The students gladly accept the challenge because they feel that they are doing the real thing.

In the beginning, a set of thirty to thirty-five cards with questions for each of the six categories is sufficient to play a good game. If a computer is available, it is easier to keep track of the questions by creating a data base. Questions and answers are coded by number, category, and level, if desired. They are arranged for print on address labels. The printed labels are affixed to large index cards in the order of the categories. After the cards have been color coded, they are ready for play.

Imaginative students are a great resource for expanding the game. The practice of formulating clear and precise questions that elicit the desired answers adds a new dimension to the language learning experience. Submitting questions can be part of an assignment or extra credit work. Guidelines for evaluation should include ratings for originality, correct use of structure and vocabulary.

Playing games in the foreign language classroom is a risky business because it may give students and outsiders the impression that foreign language is not a serious field of study. But TRIVIAL PURSUIT is not just a game; it is a constant quest for knowledge. Based on intellectual stimulation and generating spontaneous dialogue, the game contains some of the most important objectives of foreign language teaching. These objectives include expansion of vocabulary in a great variety of areas, valuable and current information on politics, the arts, history, sports, and entertainment, and above all active and effective oral use of the foreign language in a relaxed setting that is quite close to real life.